The Rochester Freedom Singers are bursting into spring! We have all been flourishing. I am experiencing a most positive rejuvenation as we gear up for our upcoming performances. Emotions run high as deadlines need to be met. We are so excited, yet sometimes very exhausted. Our spring fever has us picking out logos, printing t-shirts, getting advertisers and looking for sponsors.

Through the process of consensus we have finalized our vision statement as follows : The Rochester Freedom Singers aspire to a leadership role in promoting equality, freedom and love in our hearts, our towns and in our lives. We sing with the hope that our music will contribute to the greater understanding and acceptance of the diversity that is the beauty of the world community. Our music spans the ages of humankind, languages, religions and affectional preferences. We value inclusiveness that encourages people to live their lives wholly, completely, openly and honestly. We are deliberately totally integrated and witness that open hearts make beautiful music.

The success of our most recent joint venture with the Brighton Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Faure's Requiem on March 6th has furthered our horizons beyond my wildest dreams. During the previous week I had the privilege of speaking with Keith Moyer, Editor and Vice President/News for the D&C. He put me in touch with Richard Prince, Editor of the Speaking Out column, who worked with me throughout the

week to get an article ready for publication. From the bottom of my heart I also thank Kelley Kreilick-Jones, Joan Giuffre and Susan David for working with me night and day to make it possible. The article, "Haters Might Just See Their Own Reflection", was published on the Sunday morning of our performance. It spoke of the controversial speech of the Nation of Islam's Khallid Abdul Mohammed who made comments that sent flowing a wave of outrage and fury. When he condemns the Jews, might he be looking in the mirror? Vladimir Janelevitch proposed an explanation as to why certain populations feel so strongly about one another. "To the person whose resemblance to you is close, yet who is not really your double, you might easily end up saying, 'You are almost like me'. The similarity between us is so plain that in the eyes of the world you are my brother. But, to speak honestly, you are not my brother." The Rochester Freedom Singers is an organization built on love.

Charlotte Clark, the Public Affairs Director at WOKR Channel 13, read the article and contacted me the following day. She invited the Freedom Singers to participate in her new show called "Many Voices, Many Visions" which airs Sunday mornings at 9:00. The show is based upon the premise that although we come in many different shapes, sizes, colors, cultures and creeds, underlying our differences are similarities. And our community can be strong and peaceful only when it acknowledges it's diversity and it's unity.

On Mother's Day, Sunday May 8th, the Rochester Freedom Singers will be featured singing the show's theme song, our own arrangement of the original music written by Charlotte Clark. The talk show format will feature chorus members, Bill Coleman and Amy Peasley. Bill, a gay father, will share his pains, joys, love and commitment in that relationship. His 13-year old son, Scott, is also a singing member of the Freedom Singers. Unfortunately, Scott will soon be moving. That is, from the soprano section to the tenor section right next to his dad. Bill will be singing a solo rendition of "The Greatest Love of All". Amy Peasley, a lesbian mother, will discuss her love for her daughter, Rachael while in the midst of a three year custody battle.

The second show will air June 12th and feature Freedom Singers Michael Lee, Dr. Ted Ashizawa and Jodi Cohen. The discussion will be among a Japanese American, African American and Jewish American member.

We will be singing at the Lilac Festival on May 21st, Saturday at 12:00 noon on the center stage.

We will be performing at DUPC on Saturday, June 4th at 8:00 pm. We are reaching into our hearts and our hearts' songs to brighten one more day, feel our spirits rise, make a child smile. Our love theme concert, called "Sounds Like Love", will be featuring some exciting new twists and growths within the Rochester Freedom Singers talent. An original piece of music written by Tommy Warfield will be performed.

I want you, the readers, to know that the views and opinions from the gay and lesbian community are at the forefront of the news. The good news. The positive forces that bring our community together! And on that note, Jodi says we will all be so excited to see you at our upcoming events.

A special thanks to Bud Minard. For further information please call Jodi Cohen at 544-9969.

By: Jodi Cohen